



INTERIOR OF ST. JOHN'S CHURCH.

gether unused to the customs and proprieties of the House of Burgesses, and it was not without considerable fear and no little awkwardness that he took up the defense of the resolutions that he had prepared. We give in full the resolutions as prepared by Mr. Henry. It is said that they were written upon a fly-leaf of a law book called "Coke upon Littleton."

"Resolved, That the first adventurers and settlers of this His Majesty's colony and domain, brought with them and transmitted to their posterity and all others of His Majesty's subjects since inhabiting this His Majesty's said colony, all privileges, franchises and immunities that have at any time been here enjoyed and possessed by the people of Great Britain.

"Resolved, That by two royal charters granted by King James I., the colonists aforesaid are declared entitled to all the privileges, liberties and immunities of denizens and natural born subjects to all intents and purposes as if they had been abiding and born within the realm of England.

"Resolved, That the taxation of the people by themselves or by persons chosen by themselves to represent them, who can only know what taxes the people are able to bear and the easiest mode of raising them, and are equally affected by such taxes themselves, is the distinguishing characteristic of British freedom, and without which the ancient constitution cannot exist.

"Resolved, That His Majesty's liege people of this most ancient colony have uninterruptedly enjoyed the right of being thus governed by their own Assembly in the article of their taxes and internal police, and that the same hath never been forfeited or in any other way given up, but hath been constantly recognized by the King and the people of Great Britain.

"Resolved, That therefore the General Assembly of this colony have the sole right and power to levy taxes and impositions upon the inhabitants of this colony; and that every attempt to vest such power in any other person or persons whatsoever, other than the General Assembly aforesaid, has a manifest tendency to destroy British as well as American freedom."

These resolutions were afterwards found among the papers of Mr. Henry, on the back of which there was written by Mr. Henry the following indorsement:

"The within resolutions passed the House of Burgesses in May, 1765. That from the first opposition to the stamp act and the scheme of taxing Americans by the British Parliament, all colonies were through fear or want of opportunity to form an opposition, or upon influence from some kind or other, had remained silent. I have been for the first time elected a burgess a few days before; was young, inexperienced, unacquainted with the forms of the House and the members that composed it. Finding the men of weight averse to opposition, and the commencement of the tax at hand, and that no person was likely to step forth, I determined to venture, and alone, unadvised and unassisted, on a blank leaf of an old law book, wrote the within. Upon offering them to the House, violent debate ensued, many threats were uttered and much abuse cast on me by the party for submission. After a long and warm contest, the resolutions passed by a very small majority, perhaps of one or two only. The alarm spread throughout America with astonishing quickness, and the ministerial parties were overwhelmed. The great point of resistance to British taxation was universally established in the colonies. This brought on the war which finally separated the two countries and gave independence to ours. Whether this will prove a blessing or a curse will depend upon the use our people make of the blessing which a gracious God hath bestowed on us. If they are wise they will be great and happy; if they are of a contrary character, they will be miserable. Righteousness alone can exalt them as a nation. Reader, whoever thou art, remember this and in thy sphere practice virtue thyself and encourage it in others."

Such men as Randolph, Bland, Pendleton, Wythe, and, indeed, all the older members and members of weighty influence, presented a united opposition to the resolutions as offered by Mr. Henry, and especially to the fifth resolution.

It is said that when the last vote had been taken on the fifth resolution, Mr. Peyton Randolph, who was at that time Attorney-General, was heard to exclaim: "My God, I would have given five hundred guineas for a single vote!" This one vote would have evenly divided the House, and with Mr. Robinson's vote, who was in the chair, the last and most vital of these resolutions would have been defeated.

It was in the course of the speech which Mr. Henry made upon these resolutions that he cried out in the frenzy of his eloquence, "Caesar had his Brutus, Charles the First his Cromwell, and George the Third—" Before he could finish the sentence the Speaker cried out, "Treason!" and from every part of the House the members echoed back, "Treason! Treason!" Mr. Henry faltered not for an instant, but rising to a loftier altitude, he finished his sentence with splendid emphasis, saying, "may profit by their example; if this be treason, make the most of it."

Mr. Henry, apparently well satisfied with his work, and thinking perhaps that it would be better for him to be removed from the scenes of such intense excitement, left the town that evening. The next morning, when he was quite well out of the way, the leaders of the House, who had been unable to stem the tide of the great orator's influence the day before, undertook to undo at least a part of the work that had been done before, and expunged the fifth and most important of the resolutions, so that the first four resolutions alone remained on the journal of the House as the final official utterance. But the mischief had been done, the alarm had been sounded and the fire kindled.

Mr. Tyler says most eloquently of this incident: " meantime on the wings of the wind and on the eager tongues of men had been borne past recall, far northward and far southward, the fiery, unchastised words of nearly the entire series, to kindle in all the colonies a great flame of dauntless purpose, while Patrick himself, perhaps then only half conscious of the fateful work he had just been doing, traveled onward along the dusty highway, at once the jolliest, the most popular and the least pretentious man in all Virginia, certainly its greatest orator, possibly its greatest statesman."

For nine years, from the close of the House of Burgesses in 1765 to the fall of 1774, Mr. Henry remained in tolerable seclusion and gave himself earnestly and industriously to the practice of law.

After his return from his first session with the House of Burgesses, he removed his residence to Louisa county and lived on an estate called "Roundabout," which he bought from his father. However, in 1768 he returned to Henrico, and a few years afterwards bought a place called "Scotchtown," which continued to be his residence until, as Governor of the new State of Virginia, he made Williamsburg his home.

There seems to have been during this long period no especial requisitions made upon Mr. Henry's oratorical gifts. He was a conspicuous factor in the numerous conferences that were held by leading men in the colony, but there was small division among them touching the essential matters at stake, so there was little occasion for contention and debate. He was sent to every session of the House of Burgesses during this period; present at almost all local committees and conventions; was made a member of the first Committee of Correspondence, and finally was sent as a delegate to the first Continental Congress.

On the 24th of May, 1774, the news of the passage of the Boston port bill having come to the ears of the House of Burgesses, then in session, the following action was taken, setting apart the first day of June as a day of prayer, humiliation and fasting:

"Devoutly to implore the Divine interposition for averting the heavy calamities which threaten destruction to our civil rights and evils of civil war; to give us one heart and one mind firmly to oppose by all just and proper means every injury to American rights, and that the minds of His Majesty and his Parliament may be inspired from Above with wisdom, moderation and justice to remove from the loyal people of America all cause of danger from a continued pursuit of measures pregnant with their ruin."

Lord Dunmore, after considering the matter for two days, summoned the House of Burgesses to the Council Chamber and said to them: "I have in my hand a paper published by order of this House, conceived in such terms as reflect highly upon His Majesty and the Parliament of Great Britain, which makes it necessary for me to dissolve you, and you are dissolved accordingly."

The following day the members of the House, thus summarily dissolved, met at the Raleigh Tavern and passed resolutions deploring the policy pursued by Parliament, and recommended the establishment of an annual Congress, composed of representatives from all the colonies, "to deliberate on